DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 442 RC 023 795

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TITLE	High Stakes: Children, Testing, and Failure in American Schools. A Year in the Life of One Rural School and Its Children.
ISBN	ISBN-0-7425-1789-6
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	244p.; Foreword by Carl A. Grant.
AVAILABLE FROM	Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 15200 NBN Way, P.O. Box 191, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214 (cloth: ISBN-0-7425-1788-8, $69.00; paperback: ISBN-0-7425-1789-6, $22.95; plus $4.00 shipping). Tel: 800-462-6420 (Toll Free).
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available From EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Accountability; Black Education; *Disadvantaged Schools; *Educational Environment; Educational Equity (Finance); Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; Elementary Schools; Equal Education; *High Risk Students; *High Stakes Tests; Low Achievement; Poverty Areas; Rural Schools; Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS	*Louisiana; Low Performing Schools; Teaching to the Test

ABSTRACT

This book connects the educational conditions created by high-stakes testing to the students and teachers who are influenced or victimized by the currents driving this movement. The authors left their positions as teacher-educators and taught grades 3 and 4 for 1 year as regular teachers in one of America's most impoverished schools. Redbud Elementary School (a pseudonym) in rural Louisiana has 611 students. Almost all qualify for free or reduced meals, most are African American, and many live in extreme poverty with a single parent/relative. The school serves grades preK-4; is badly in need of repair; and lacks even the most basic amenities, such as a library or hot water. The teachers, mostly White, are among the lowest paid in the nation. Louisiana is currently one of three states that mandate grade repetition for elementary and middle school students who fail high-stakes achievement tests, although other states are headed in that direction. The story of the 2000-2001 school year at Redbud presents the voices of children, teachers, and politicians to portray an underfunded, struggling school working hard to educate its children in a time of accountability mania and high-stakes pressure. Three major issues are addressed: the grinding effects of acute poverty on all aspects of life; negative consequences of the continuing drive for accountability in the schools; and the unreasonable demands placed on teachers, which stifle their creativity and enthusiasm and drive them from the profession. Other issues include the growth of for-profit ventures that feed off the accountability movement and their alliances with policymakers, and the need to hold politicians and policymakers accountable for the conditions of schools and schooling. Extensive recommendations are presented. (Contains 110 references and an index.) (SV)

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